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crops have been adopted, besides vegetables and clover (berseem). During the last five years, persons who had sufficient land have started to grow sugar-cane and cotton with these two crops. This widened cropping has been due to the need for more cash crops, and to the increase in transport facilities for selling sugar-cane and cotton. On the whole, however, the village produces mainly subsistence crops, which form the basis of the villagers' bread intake.

The agricultural activities in the village are regulated by the time-honoured Ancient Egyptian calendar which is now known as the Coptic Calendar, and this co-exists with the two other calendars, the Moslem (Hijri) and the European (Miladi).[1] These three calendars are used by the villagers in different circumstances. The Coptic Calendar is the oldest in use, followed by the Hijri or lunar one, whilst the European has been adopted in Egypt since 1875. While the Coptic Calendar, based on the solar system, is mainly used to regulate and co-ordinate the agricultural activities, the Hijri Calendar, based on the lunar system, fixes the religious and ceremonial feasts; the European is mainly used for activities connected either with legal procedures or other official business. More often than not, especially with the older generation, the European dates are changed into either the Coptic or lunar dates.[2]

The methods and implements of work are more or less the same traditional ones known to have been used by the Egyptian farmer for thousands of years. The 'touriah' or the 'fass' is the indispensable implement to any farmer. It is a kind of hoe which can be turned to many uses, such as breaking up clods of earth, digging furrows, scraping fertilizer clay from the hills, and so forth. For ploughing, he uses the Egyptian plough called 'mihrat', dragged by one or two yoked cows. The water-wheel and the 'shadoof' are used at present only for irrigating the small parcels of land which are higher than the water level in the canals. Such plots of land are very few, compared with large areas which are easily irrigated by merely opening the runnel between the field and the canal, which is filled by the water raised by the pumping machine. The farmer also uses the 'garraffa', which is a beam of wood or a trunk of a palm-tree, to level down land after breaking up the clods with the hoe.[3]

In these methods of work, farm labour is extensive rather than intensive. Work is spread over almost the whole year. Of course, every farmer knows that more effort and concentration are called for in the two periods, that of preparing the soil and sowing of the seeds, and that of harvesting. Again, the gathering of fertilizer and manure is an equally important and arduous task, though more spread out during the period of two or four months for

[1] The Hijri Calendar starts with the flight of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina in A.D. 622.

[2] See Appendix II for a note on the use of lunar and Coptic months in the village with the agricultural and religious activities connected with them.

[3] For methods and implements of farm work in Egypt see Henry Habib-Ayrout, *The Fellahin*, Chapter IV, Cairo (n.d.).

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Chapter Three

FOLK LIFE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE VILLAGE

A STUDY of the village community cannot ignore an analysis of the process of social change and its by-products. Unlike a primitive tribe, the village community is an integral part of a larger whole—the nation. One of the contributions of modern sociology is the distinction between community and state or society as constituting 'distinct categories of integrative forces'. The integrative forces of the community are based on more spontaneous, natural, and direct relations binding people who are of the same kin; whereas society is more artificial, more indirect, and more deliberate in its relations, maintaining its unity and cohesion with more conscious effort. The social heritage of the community is mainly local, tied up with its habitat; thus, usually, community and locality are almost synonymous.[1]

Such distinction has also been made between genuine and spurious culture, or between folk culture and modern civilization. In the analysis of Silwa community and social change, the concept of folk society is to be adopted as a useful one. Robert Redfield has successfully introduced this term to suggest the inclusion of 'peasant and rustic peoples who are not wholly independent of cities'.[2] Hence, it is necessary to project folk life in Silwa, and the processes of social change, against the larger framework of culture change in the Egyptian society.

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the state has envisaged the modernization of Egypt mainly in terms of Western civilization, the impact of which has been steadily increasing since the French expedition of 1798. It was through the efforts of the French scholars and Napoleon's reforms that Egypt started to interest itself in Western civilization. The Western way of life was greatly admired by Mohammad Ali, who ascended to power in 1805, and whose ambitious plans to build up a modern state led him to imitate Europe as widely as possible.

[1] This distinction is based on S. F. Nadel's article on 'Nupe State and Community', in *Africa*, Vol. VIII, 1935.

[2] Robert Redfield, 'The Folk Society', in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. LII, 1947, footnote, p. 293.

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Ever since then, certain aspects of European civilization have been influencing the Egyptian folk life to varying degrees. However, the Westernization of Egypt, with its differential rate mainly between urban and rural districts, could be summarized in the increasing industrialization, in the spread of schools, in the establishment of a parliamentary system with its concomitant political parties, in the awakening of national feeling, in the expansion of medical facilities and the decline of folk medicine, in the growth of an intellectual middle class and a working class, and in the expanding of the press and other means of communication. Upon the degree of the penetration of such social forces depend the transformations that the folk structure have undergone.[1]

The phrase 'modernization' and not 'Westernization' of Egypt is in fact a happier term, which is more acceptable to the Egyptians. The educated Egyptians take a special pride in the approximation of their country's institutions and reforms to those of the West, together with an emphasis on their national colouring. Some of them have a romantic way of exalting the glories of the past mixed with various aspirations towards religious revival.

The impact of Western civilization on Egypt could be described as the two responses designated by Toynbee as 'Zealotism' and 'Herodianism'. The former response describes a state of mind and a pattern of behaviour which adheres to the traditional way of life with great scrupulousness and rigidity in the face of the pressures of the Western challenge. The Zealot's behaviour is essentially irrational and instinctive; he says in his heart that he will go thus far and no further. Herodianism is the other response based on the principle that the most effective way to guard against the danger of the new challenge is to master its secrets and to learn to fight the enemy with his own weapons and tactics.[2]

The 'ulema of al-Azhar, particularly during the nineteenth century and the beginnings of the twentieth century, have been amongst the strongest opponents of Western life and the general trends of secularization. The attitude of the 'ulema in the nineteenth century towards the Western civilization is revealed in a conversation between Michaud, a French traveller who came to Egypt during the reign of Mohammad Ali, and the Mufti of al-Mansourah. The latter maintained that although Europeans accuse Easterners of rigidity and lack of purpose, they themselves do not know where and when to stop. Therefore, they always exceed their limits, and to the Mufti, going beyond the limit is worse than not being able to reach it. The result of European civilization, he believed, was chaos and dissatisfaction. He likened it to a fermenting drink which breaks the vessel that holds it.[3]

[1] For a study of the impact of Western civilization on Egyptian life a generation ago, see Hans Kohn, *Nationalism and Imperialism in the Hither East*, London, 1932; and *Western Civilization in the Near East*, London, 1936.

[2] Arnold Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, pp. 198–4.

[3] S. Ghorbal, *Mohammad Ali al-Kabir*, p. 76.

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The attitude of the 'ulema and the interpretation of Islam in a narrow-minded way have led some of the progressive 'ulema to a new way of thinking for the rejuvenation of the Moslem way of life. This need was voiced by al-Sayyid Jamal-al-Din Al-Afghani and Mohammad Abduh, whose ideas met with opposition from the 'ulema of their day. Al-Afghani, on his visit to Cairo in 1871, urged the need for adapting Islam to modern conditions and of instituting radical educational reforms in al-Azhar. He believed that Moslem countries should work for their freedom from foreign domination and reformulate their religion which, he thought, by reason of its inner spiritual force could be reinterpreted to suit the demands of modern life.[1] Mohammad Abduh, like his teacher al-Afghani, was a vigorous critic of the narrow content and method of teaching in al-Azhar. He advocated the broadening of the basis of learning by studying not only the works of classical Arabic and theology for the defence of the Faith, but by studying also the modern sciences, history, and comparative religion to catch up with Western progress.[2]

However, secularization of life in Egypt and divorce from religious principles and justifications have rarely been more than skin deep. In the constitution of the country, Islam is the religion of the state. Moreover, Islamic forces have always provided the basic guidance in life for individual as well as for corporate life.

Indications of a religious revival are witnessed in movements like that of the Moslem Brotherhood and in the considerable flow of literature dealing with the life of the Prophet, the Companions, and the four Caliphs, written by eminent authors. Indeed, many of the Arab thinkers assert that without the inspiration and guidance of Islam, the future holds barren prospects for the Moslem world whose spiritual and intellectual greatness depends essentially upon its faith. They also claim that a purification of Islam is also necessary to rid it of the superstitions which have led to the backwardness of the masses. This purification, combined with subsequent intensification of Islamic principles, can alone enable religion to become as creative a force as it once used to be.[3]

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One of the main forces that is inextricably connected with the process of social change since the beginning of the twentieth century is the emergence of the middle class in Egypt. Hitherto, Egypt's economic and political structure was dominated by a class of warriors similar to the medieval knights in Europe. The dynasties of the Ayyubides (A.D. 1171–1250) and the Mamelukes (A.D. 1250–1517) relied almost entirely on a class of warriors in both their internal and external policies. This class received its crushing blow from Mohammad Ali in 1811, and this paved the way for the great landowners to wield social and political power. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the middle class of government

[1] Charles Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, p. 15.
[2] H. R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam*, p. 39.
[3] A. J. Arberry and Rom Landau (ed.), *Islam Today*, pp. 14–16.

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177 officials, lawyers, doctors, teachers, and those engaged in commerce, has begun to exert an increasing influence on Egyptian life. This class sees itself not only standing against external political pressure, but also against big landowners, thus championing the feelings and aspirations of the whole nation.

Another important factor in Egyptian society is the relatively recent feeling of nationhood and state sovereignty. Since the Arab conquest of Egypt in A.D. 642, the country has been a part of the Moslem world. In Islam, political and religious matters are indivisible, and their conduct is vested in the ruler who is the instrument of both canon and civil law. But to say that Islam does not distinguish social life and civic status from religious principles of the Faith does not mean that it has established a new pattern of life in the Near East. The religious foundation of society were existent in the ancient Egyptian times, when the Pharaoh was the supreme ruler as well as the representative of the gods on earth.

The Ottoman Empire, however, witnessed in its latter days the gradual moving away from Islamic theocracy. With this, the religious colouring of the Caliphate gradually paled until that institution was eventually abolished in modern Turkey in 1924. The breakdown of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War left the way open for the rise of Arab nationalism in the modern sense of the word.

It has been the deliberate policy of the Egyptian rulers, since the days of Mohammad Ali, to modernize Egypt. More often than not, the pursuit of such a policy has led to aping of Western institutions, regardless of the different social, economic and political background. It is one of the recent contributions of sociology that 'the end products of culture fusion resemble a chemical rather than a mechanical mixture. The resulting culture will not be a simple aggregation of elements, all of which can be traced to one or the other of the parent cultures, but a new thing many of whose patterns cannot be directly referred to either.' In the light of such a remark one is not surprised to find that many Western institutions have not yielded the results intended and expected from them in Egyptian society. An interesting line of research would be to compare the products of the Egyptian parliamentary system, Europeanized system of schools, co-education, industrialization, and so forth, with similar institutions and processes in the West. A critical evaluation and adaptation of borrowings must be always faced; and importations of institutions can only be justified in so far as they could be digested and assimilated by local conditions.

It is appropriate here to mention that, in spite of the political and social vicissitudes that have overtaken Egyptian society, the folk-life has mainly held its own within, and even sometimes against, the trends in the larger society. Various political struggles have occurred throughout the history of Egypt, but the common people, tied down to their land, submitted to any social order enforced upon them. They rarely took part in any resistance and left the battles to the military and ruling classes. To them a

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military defeat meant the ousting of one ruling power by another.[1] Although it is these rulers who have engaged the main interest of historians, it is the habits and traditions of the common folk that have, in fact, been the ultimate forces determining the general run of Egyptian life. What Gruening wrote of Mexico, quoted by Redfield, is equally applicable to the situation in Egypt. 'In few countries is political history less significant than in Mexico, yet its historiographies are pre-eminently political.' Redfield continues: 'The formal institutions, the explicit statement of programme or policy, the bulk of contemporary documents, lie remote from the ways of the masses and record their history almost not at all. The world of the cultivated classes who alone are articulate and alone communicate freely with us, is a world apart from that of the folk.'[2]

Only to a very small extent has Silwa been affected by the forces mentioned earlier. It still preserves its folk culture as the basis of its community life. The village is a homogeneous community in the threefold implication of the term. It is homogeneous to the extent that the villagers belong, or at least consider themselves to belong, to one blood group, engaging in the same kind of work, and, moreover, characterized by slow rate of social change.[3]

The question of social change exists, however, in terms of 'setting and background', and not by itself. 'This is why a discussion of change in culture has meaning only as part of the problem of cultural stability. Both terms are relative and dependent on one another.'[4]

In the process of social change examined in Yucatan, Redfield maintains that the life of primitive peoples can be contrasted with the way of life characterizing civilization in modern urban centres. He maintains that the change is one from a relatively immobile, homogeneous society in which relationships are personal, controls familial, sanctions sacred, with a well-integrated culture, to one tending to have opposite characteristics. In short, organization, individualization, and secularization are causally interrelated with isolation, integration, and homogeneity. In Yucatan, the

[1] Gibb and Bowen say that during the Ottoman rule of the Arab Provinces, and even before that, governors and governed had little effect on each other. 'The explanation is to be found in the very lack of a complex, all-embracing political organization. . . . We may visualize Moslem society as composed of two co-existing groups, the relations between which were for the most part formal and superficial. One group formed the governing class of soldiers and officials, the other the governed class of merchants, artisans and cultivators. Each was organized internally on independent lines and neither group interfered with the organization of the other in normal circumstances.' *Islamic Society and the West*, Vol. I, Part I, p. 209.

[2] Quoted by R. Redfield, *Tepoztlan, A Mexican Village*, p. 1: 'In Egypt at present, the new social order is deliberately attempting to bridge the gap between these two social strata. Many of the new legislations aim at minimizing disparities between citizens and at providing equal opportunities for all.'

[3] See Margaret Mead, 'Character Formation and Diachronic Theory', in *Social Structure*, p. 21.

[4] Melville J. Herskovits, 'The Processes of Cultural Change', in *Science of Man*, p. 144.

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community marked with the lowest degree of isolation and homogeneity was characterized by the highest degree of individualization, secularization, and disorganization, and conversely.[1]

This hypothesis of the historical phases of culture change has stimulated other anthropologists to test it. Sol Tax, examining the hypothesis in the light of his Guatemalan data, was led to make a distinction between two aspects of culture that would cut across Redfield's framework. With regard to the world view and the beliefs about nature and man, the Guatemalan Indians are of the primitive type, while in their kind of social relations they are of the civilized type. He maintains that the interrelationships of the folk-life characteristics as found in Yucatan do not necessarily repeat themselves in every folk society. The Guatemalan Indians, unsophisticated, homogeneous in beliefs and practices, are mobile, having relationships of the impersonal type, with formal institutions dictating the acts of individuals, with familial organization weak, and with life secularized.[2]

It was also pointed out that Max Weber has shown how capitalistic commercialism could, and did, go hand in hand with piety in the case of the Protestants and the Puritans. Under certain conditions of literate, and at least partly urbanized, society, a culture may be both highly commercial and sacred as in the case of the Jewish history.[3]

In the light of these findings, Silwa community fits rather with Redfield's characteristics of the folk society. Silwa is a comparatively isolated community, as it lies at a distance of about thirty miles from both Edfu and Kom Ombo, the nearest urban centres to the north and south respectively, while more than seven hundred miles separates it from Cairo. On the other hand, it is less isolated than other village communities in the sense that there is a Post Office, a Railway Station (at which express trains do not stop), as well as a Police Station. It is also less isolated in that it has a weekly market, to which people from surrounding villages and traders from nearby towns come to buy and sell their goods.

The villagers are, on the whole, relatively immobile, a phenomenon that makes face to face relationships loom large in the folk society. The attachment to their locality is also associated with a sectional pride in their origin, which embraces the various villages of G'afra, and explains to them the differences between their customs and traditions and those of other regions. The villagers refer to themselves as well as to other Moslems by the term 'nation of Moslems' (ummat-al-muslimeen), and feel that they are Arabs first and foremost. One occasionally sees pictures of Imam Ali and his sons, Hassan and Hussein, Abu-zeid-al-Hilali, decorating some houses, especially of newly married couples. For the villagers, the world is

[1] Robert Redfield, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*, pp. 360, 362.
[2] Sol Tax, 'World View and Social Relations in Guatemala', in *American Anthropologist*, Vol. XLIII, 1941, pp. 27–42.
[3] Robert Redfield, 'The Folk Society', in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. LII, 1947, p. 308.

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any difference or separation between religion and the rest of life. 'It is most true that, in the more remote communities, the behaviour expected of kinsmen rests under the warrant of ritual and religion. . . . In the villages, one behaves toward an older male cousin in accordance with that pattern of respect for elders and kinsmen, compliance with which people believe to be essential to virtue. . . . In the remoter villages, the uncontrovertible gravity of the relationship is announced to the individual again and again in the rituals of "paying respects" and of hand-washing. The plan for conduct . . . is a sacred plan, well documented with ritual and belief.'[1]

The folk life of Silwa as previously outlined provides the background and setting for a study of culture change in the Egyptian society as a whole. One can see that many of the trends of historical change follow to a considerable extent Redfield's hypothesis of the transformation of folk life into civilization. In reading Lane's description of Cairo life of over a century ago, before the full impact of Western techniques and civilization, one can identify more or less the same design of living in Cairo as exists at present in Silwa.[2] Throughout the book the reader notices in the mid nineteenth century Cairo society, the all-pervading religious frame of reference mingled with magical rites; the importance of such institutions as the family, the abundance of folk medicine, attitudes towards authority, age and sex, similar to those held and observed at present in isolated communities such as Silwa.

However, this does not mean that Silwa has not been itself changing, as evidenced by statements from the older generation and observed by the writer himself. The trend on the whole is towards imitating the city pattern of life, especially in its material aspects. A common saying, especially amongst the youth, is 'If you want wealth and elevation, go and live in the cities, for poverty is the heritage of rural life'. Yet what the villagers of Silwa want and have started to imitate is not the Europeanized type of city dwellers but the Arab section of city dwellers. No one in Silwa has ever entertained the idea of wearing a European dress. Some of the new generation and those who have been to town might wear a smaller turban, manufactured shoes instead of the hand-made markoob, a manufactured woollen galabia, or tob instead of the zabout woven on the village loom. On special occasions they imitate the city way of cooking their vegetables and meat, using tomato juice instead of the traditional way of boiling and spicing it.

The imitation of city ways is to a large extent connected with prestige values. Two clans have, for instance, incorporated a latrine in their guest houses, imitating the Omda of the village, while there is none in their own houses. On festival and religious occasions, it is always desirable for a clan or a family to invite a Koran reciter from town even if his voice is not as

[1] Robert Redfield, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*, p. 229.
[2] Edward William Lane, *Customs and Manners of Modern Egyptians*.

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good as the village reciter, this being justified on the grounds that the 'village girl is always one-eyed'. Introduction of cash crops like sugar-cane and cotton has caught on for the same reasons as landlords who can afford to live in the city grow such crops. Emulation of city standards for social prestige is obvious in the example of those few people who white-washed their houses mainly on the outside but seldom inside, in contrast to the dark grey colour of mud, the ordinary house coating. The same whitewash with inscriptions from the Koran concerning pilgrimage, crude paintings of camels, and mahmal procession also form the outside decoration of the houses of pilgrims made immediately after their return from Mecca.

While some articles of men's wear or some parts of their speech have been affected by city ways, women's dress and language have hardly been affected at all. This is partly due to their relative restriction of movement and travel compared with men. On some occasion, there was a commotion in the village concerning the spread of city headgear among the women. This led to their nightly itinerary to fill their jars from the Nile being stopped for a while, as the men complained that women made it an occasion for displaying their colourful headgear.

The villagers appreciate the fact that city dwellers are much more inclined to mind their own business and engage in no gossip. Their attitude towards gossip is, however, paradoxical. It is considered sinful to talk about somebody behind his back; the Koran condemns it, and the Prophetic Tradition warns against it as 'gossip eats up the good deeds as the fire eats up wood'. Much of the village preacher's advice in the Friday sermon is on the avoidance of gossip and the use of the human tongue which could be like the scorpion's tail. Yet on the other hand, the villagers in their formal and informal gatherings occupy themselves with talking about the doings, the problems, the quarrels, and the general business of other people. They will tell you that they are engaged in just having a mouthful of words, or just chewing the cud. It is well known that gossip is almost an institution in rural areas, partly informative, partly interpretive, and on the whole functions as a means of social control and a medium for the formation of public opinion. In this connection, my informant Ali told me that townspeople have more scope for piety, as the occasions for gossip do not arise as among the people of Silwa.

One of the main things that a small number of enlightened villagers are aware of is the fact that in the cities people can find more religious enlightenment as to what are the principles of pure religion in distinction from religion mixed with pre-Islamic customs (Jahilyia), which they think are prevalent in the village. On enquiring about examples of the supremacy of the chances of the city dwellers over the villagers in this respect, most of the information elicited concerned religious ritual. Ali, as well as other persons, stated that city people know how to perform their ablutions better, how to say their prayers in a more acceptable way, and have no mourning

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customs like the people in Silwa. The visiting priest who comes yearly to the village is certainly welcome on his arrival, and people flock to him for advice on religious matters. On attending one of these meetings, the writer was struck by the number of questions that those present put to him concerning the details of prayers, e.g. whether one lifts his hand up to his shoulder or up to his ears, how one sits on after prostration, what one might say before and after prayers. Other questions that arose were queries about whether certain sayings or deeds were considered to be religiously approved or disapproved, how and to whom one would make a sacrifice oath, whether visiting saints' tombs is a good thing or not, and so forth.

Village life, on the whole, whether in religious or social spheres, is very ritually and ceremonially conscious, and almost invulnerable on this level. Greeting, hospitality, eating, praying, exchange of social obligations, circumcision, marriage, and dozens of items of life are shrouded with ritual and traditional prescriptions. My informant, Mahmoud, told me that after a sermon given by a preacher coming from the city, who told the villagers that their customs practised on the death of a person were non-Islamic, they took a vow not to practise them any more. Yet the adherence to the oath was made for some six months, after which people gradually relapsed to their traditional ways, with the only exception that women were allowed to follow the deceased as far as the southern end of the village instead of going on to the cemetery as had been the practice hitherto.

The extent of social change on the folkhood of the village could be also examined in the villagers' ideas about sickness and disease which are mixed with ritual and religious beliefs. Disease, it is supposed, can be caused either by failure to fulfil some religious ritual or ceremony, such as a financially able man not performing his pilgrimage, or the failure to give the promised offerings to a saint, or providing a naming ceremony for a new-born baby. If saints are suspected as the cause of the disease, usually a woman known to be the guardian of that particular saint, or upon whom saints descend, would be consulted to tell whether the family has broken or forgotten a sacrificial custom. If no special saint has been offended, then bread could be specially baked and distributed as a 'karama' amongst people after the Friday prayer, asking God to relieve the sick.

Sickness can also be caused by the evil eye, and in such cases a learned man is asked to recite verses from the Koran or write a charm (higab) to be worn by the sick person as a prophylactic safeguard as well as a means of treatment. Certain diseases like paralysis are believed to be caused by the evil red wind emanating from the touch of jinn; an epileptic is also a person who is mounted and obsessed by jinn who usually haunt deserted places, wells, and high spots in the mountains. Curiously enough, tuberculosis is believed to be caused by pretence and social conceit.

Moreover, a sickness is considered as God's test for the endurance and patience of the faithful. As the faithful are always exposed to affliction, their faith in God should never be shaken, and hence their endurance of

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sickness is a pious deed. It is often told to a sick person that holy people have suffered from one ailment or another and have endured it willingly for God.

All this shows how the villagers' traditional notions about health and sickness are mixed with magical and religious beliefs; God is the afflicter as well as the healer; it is He who has fixed the life span of every person, and this cannot be lengthened or precipitated by a second, much less a minute, unless He wills it. Together with this, there is the belief that hope and propitiation cannot fail to produce some expected results in certain crises of life.

The village has experienced some measure of direct contact with modern medicine as a result of the establishment of a health unit by the Ministry of Health in 1936. This health unit is a wonderful building, situated on the southern border of the village, and is composed of a maternity section, an isolation ward, and a general section. It cost the Government about £E3,000, yet it has never functioned properly or systematically as doctors who came to it could hardly endure life in the village for more than six months, whereupon they tried every possible means to be transferred to towns. The villagers appreciated the health unit at the beginning, but their resentment to it was ironically aroused during the malaria and typhoid epidemic of 1943 on the grounds that sick people were taken away to the isolation ward, and dying away from one's relatives and home is the worst thing that can happen to any person. Their hostility towards it is expressed with reference to its unfortunate location, it being near the cemetery; thus going to the health unit has become psychologically a bad omen. However, the establishment of the health unit has given folk-medicine the greatest challenge, and at present the villagers are becoming increasingly interested in medicine as such, alongside their usual traditional cures. In serious cases the doctor's help is usually sought besides the traditional cures, and it is becoming a sign of social prestige to bring him into the home of the sick; but remaining in hospital for treatment or isolation for contagious diseases is still resisted.

Although one finds that the villagers have adopted certain items of material culture from the town, such as the use of manufactured goods, new types of vegetables, and some medicines, such adoption is a surface substitution. Their ideas about land ownership, the importance of children, family and clan solidarity, categories of respect relationships, sex dichotomy, supernatural sanctions, and the importance of ritual and ceremony in both social and religious life, remain almost unaltered.

There is, however, one feature in the village's social life that has undergone a certain amount of change as a result of changes in the economic conditions, and that is the role and function of leadership. Till very recently leadership has been mainly connected with families owning large plots of land; and such families assumed the responsibility and obligation for receiving guests from outside the village, providing hospitality for

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to and decided by a Government superior to local sanctions, the esteem of local institutions has been undermined and the traditional structure of authority has lost some of its grip.

If the villagers have increasingly resorted to Government procedures in their disputes, they still consider both Government and Government officials as agencies of imposition and control, and hence to be feared. The identification of any Effendi wearing European suit and fez with a policeman is indicative of the role of the Government in the people's mind. The first strong impact of centralized Government was probably during the reign of Mohammed Ali, when its pressures were felt through conscription, the rigid collection of taxes, and the registration of land. For a long time in Egypt this apprehension held towards the Government was connected with education, since education and conscription were associated during the days of Mohammed Ali, while hitherto war had been the business of a certain caste and farmers were not concerned with it. The fear of Government authorities is reflected in the story of the old man in the village who had been very annoyed and did not speak to his son for a long time because the latter was entangled in a dispute for which the father had to be called to the police station to give evidence. The father considered his going to the police station as a humiliation brought to him by his son.

It is also considered as a betrayal to report cases of infectious diseases to the authorities, as this would cause trouble to the family by involving the father and the mother in governmental queries and procedures. To keep away from governmental institutions was always the safest policy. An example of this is the failure of the branch of the Agricultural Credit Bank established in 1938 to help the farmers to have their crops secured, to borrow money accordingly, and thus to rescue them from falling a prey to usury. The bank has been in fact mainly used by outside crop merchants to buy crops from the village and store them until prices improved. It only functioned to its full capacity during the last war when governmental legislation compelled every farmer to sell part of his crop to the Government according to the land he cultivated. The villagers have never taken to the benefits of the bank, partly because it involved becoming implicated with Government procedures, and partly because it implied loss of prestige, due to dealing with interest, which is religiously forbidden. For the same reason, life insurance is never entertained by the villagers, nor by a great section of the Egyptian society as a whole, partly because it involves interest, as well as because it presents a challenge to man's destiny. In 1950 the branch of the bank in the village had to be closed down. Yet this does not mean that usury is not practised amongst the villagers in Silwa in spite of being condemned by the Koran, although it is not widespread and is avoided as much as possible.[1]

[1] M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, in talking about the Koranic prohibition of 'riba' (increase, interest) in Moslem society remarks that 'it was in that very society . . . that

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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Thus it is obvious that most of the Government institutions have not yielded the results expected from them in the village. So far the health unit, the agricultural bank, and the compulsory school have proved to be failures. This is mainly attributed to the lack of co-operation from the villagers as a result of the clash between their traditional views and practices and the new institutions, the purposes of which have never been explained or made comprehensible to the villagers.

It is appropriate here also to mention the ideal of hospitality which has been affected by the process of social change. The villagers regret the waning of the idea of hospitality defined in terms of ability to render it when the occasion arises. Hospitality is conceived also in terms of offering food to guests, relatives, or casual *en route* visitors to the village. It also involves distributing wealth on ceremonial occasions such as circumcision and wedding, the failure of which would subject a person to severe criticism. To be able to conform to these standards is one of the chief attributes of authority, prestige, self-respect, and social recognition. The ideal personality type, alongside with the pious man, is the hospitable man. The common saying runs: 'He who is hospitable will never suffer in this world.' The hospitable person should offer without being asked, and should insist when the receiver is reluctant to accept; otherwise his hospitality is like that of the boatmen—who, being uncertain of their food resources, cannot be hospitable. By offering hospitality a person in fact creates bonds between himself and the partakers, where the latter respond in terms of respect, service, reciprocal hospitality, or at least prayers, in the case of the poor. The ideal is certainly that of giving away, and not of accumulating. Those who accumulate without giving are described as 'rotting', or like the 'cord that holds the knickers'—implying that they are insignificant and socially unworthy of recognition.

This gradual dwindling of hospitality, so much deplored by the villagers, is mainly due to the fact that there are few families in the village who can afford to adopt the traditional ideal. This is certainly a result of the change in the economic structure of the village due to the constant division of land and the increase in population. Moreover, with increasing contacts with city ways, the villagers are more aware of the importance of money and the personal benefits derived from its purchasing power; and the recognition attached to hospitality, though upheld and valued as an ideal, is offset by the new acquisitive spirit. In this connection, my informant, Ali, told me that in the good old days if a visitor expressed his appreciation of an object or a utensil, the host usually offered it to him, but this is no longer the general rule. The spirit, however, still persists in the case of a woman visitor who, for instance, admires the tea offered to

there developed, in the 9th and 10th centuries, the banking institutions and commercial customs which were to become those of Europe, and which are quite inconsistent with the Quranic Law'. *Muslim Institutions* (translated from the French), London, 1950, pp. 190–1.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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*859
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properly. These things are necessary for the game: a palm-tree branch (used as a cane), a ring of rope and a very small stick. The player cannot participate in the benefits of the game until he scores a one and the person is thus 'sweetened'. Further scores are: six for a 'Sultan' who holds the ring of rope, four for a 'Minister' (vizir) who holds the cane, and three ones for the small stick.[1] Directly a Sultan and a Minister are scored, the former can command the latter to beat any 'unsweetened' boy with the cane (usually from one to ten strikes on the soles of the feet). The small stick, when it is scored, is the 'stick of mercy' and the holder can lessen any of the Sultan's penalties. As the game continues, the different symbols of command, execution and mercy change hands according to the tab scorings and thus give ample chance for retaliation, conspiracy and altercation.

17. The third game in which scoring is by 'tab' is called 'Burial' (Dafn). It is a simple game for which the participants sit in a circle. Whoever first scores three ones—sometimes the rule is consecutively, at other times cumulatively—buries the tab sticks in the ground. The player who preceded the winner must then attempt to get the sticks out by using his chin to remove the soil and his teeth to extract the sticks. This takes place amidst the jeers and words of humiliation from the whole of the group.

18. Another type of Seega is played without 'tab' scoring, where a square of five rows of five holes (Khimasiyah), or seven rows of seven holes (Sibaiyah) is made on the ground. Each player, in the case of 'Khimasiyah', has twelve 'dogs', each dozen of different material—crockery bits, stone or dried pellets of camel-dung. The players agree on who shall 'throw' first. The first player puts two of his pieces in any two of the holes except the centre hole into which no piece may be put at this stage. The other player follows by putting two of his pieces where he will. In this way both players place their pieces in all the twenty-four holes, and the centre hole is left for the first move, which is played by the last person who placed his pieces. He moves any one of his pieces adjacent to the centre hole, into the centre hole, and his opponent follows by moving any of his pieces adjacent to the vacated hole, into it. The aim is to get pieces in holes immediately adjacent either side of the opponent's piece, whereupon the surrounded piece is 'eaten' and thrown out of play. The winner is the one who is left with three pieces to the opponent's one.

For example, if player 'A' move his (o) dog to the centre hole (as indicated by the lined arrow) he would be able to 'eat' the 1 and 2 (x)s. Player 'B' would then move his dog to the vacated hole (as shown by the dotted arrow) and could eat 3, 4 and 5 (o)s, as he is allowed to return to his former position if he could 'eat' by such a move.

One of the significant features about 'Seega' is that, though it is an individual game, it is usually, whether played by boys or adults, an attraction for a gathering, everybody giving his advice as to the best move. This

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[1] A residue of the Ottoman rule in Egypt seems to reflect itself in this game.

1:Ammar E,I-5 (1951) 1954
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EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

872 villagers consider the establishment of a primary school in their village as a sign of 'blessedness' enabling their boys to find some scope for work in government jobs, especially as the land resources are becoming increasingly limited. As one of the villagers put it, 'It is free education for which one had to go previously to Aswan or Cairo'. The new school accommodates 138 pupils in three grades. As expected, it has affected the number of boys who go to the Kuttab, the numbers of one of them declining from forty to fourteen. It has also affected the number of boys in the elementary school, especially those in the third grade who, instead of remaining in the school, preferred to go to the second or third grade of the primary school. The two following statements express the feeling of the boys about the new school:

[171 291] A boy of twelve said: 'We like the new school, as we wear suits (European), which are much nicer than the gallabiahs which we used to wear in the elementary school. The former is better than the latter in its lessons, order, and cleanliness.'

Another boy of eleven said: 'The primary school has more knowledge to teach. We wear an "effendi" suit, warmer and more beautiful than the gallabiah. We shall become government officials when we pass our examinations. Moreover, there are no girls in our new school.'

The boys and girls of the elementary school, in all the ten statements received, envy those boys of the primary school their 'effendi' dress, but equally assert that primary pupils are not better off than they in any way. They say: 'We have the same books and learn the same lessons, and are capable of challenging them in reading, or in the multiplication tables.'

212 After discussing the three educational institutions in the village, it is necessary to review the state of literacy in general. The writer could not possibly make a survey of the literate people in Silwa, but thinks that their percentage would certainly be little less than the average for the whole country. The following table shows the percentage of male and female literates for Egypt as a whole since 1907.[1]

TABLE VII

Literacy in Egypt, male and female

Year	*Total*	*Males*	*Females*
1907	5·4	9·8	1·1
1917	7·9	13·6	2·1
1927	13·8	22·9	4·7
1937	18·6	26·8	10·5

The general census for the year 1947 has not been published yet, but it

[1] The table is made by calculating the percentage for the figures given in the general census for the respective years.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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Appendix Three

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE STANDARD OF LIVING IN SILWA

In discussing the standard of living in the village, the writer is aware that the term is essentially a relative or comparative one. Its application in such a manner is almost impossible as there is no way of comparing the present conditions of the village with those of the past or with those of the town. Certain changes in the demands of the peasants as a result of increasing contacts with town life will be discussed later; it is sufficient here to mention that the villagers, at least those who frequent the town, are aware of other standards of living to which they would like to attain. Consumption, production and human needs are sociologically relevant only in so far as they are related to a particular society. For a sociological enquiry human needs have no absolute validity independent of their cultural context and their knowledge by the members of that particular community. Beyond this any statements concerning minimum standard of living or basic needs inevitably imply a value judgment.[1]

Here the criterion to be adopted for the evaluation of the standard of living is an internal one; in other words, we are attempting to compute whether the land owned at present by the people in the village is sufficient to supply their needs as envisaged by the people themselves.

The main index for such an evaluation would be the relation between the average income and the average consumption *per capita*. The value of crops is estimated in the following computation according to 1951 prices.

The acre in winter crop produces on an average:[2]

Product	*Price per unit*[3] *in £E*	*Total*
4 ardabs of wheat	.. 6	24
1 ardab of barley	.. 3	3
1 ardab of beans	.. 6	6
		£E33

[1] See J. E. Goldthorpe, 'An Examination of the Concept of Need', *The Sociological Review*, Vol. XLII, Section 10, 1950. Also, M. Read, *Native Standards of Living*.

[2] As a rule, for winter crop, two-thirds of the acre is sown with wheat and the rest with barley and beans. [3] The Egyptian pound is almost equivalent to the English pound.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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PREFACE

peasants have welcomed me into their lives has enabled me to get into much closer touch with them than is possible for the ordinary foreigner. I can truly say that the kindness generally that I have received has made the years which I have spent in Egypt the happiest in my life. My desire is that I may be able to continue my work and leave behind me a true record of the many interesting and ancient customs of that most attractive country.

To my brother, Dr A. M. Blackman, I am indebted for all the ancient analogies. Not only so, but he has devoted hours to the careful perusal of my manuscript, and moreover has seen this book through the press and made all the indexes, thus enabling me to carry on uninterruptedly my researches in Egypt. If, therefore, the book achieves any success I feel that much of that success will be due to him.

To the Councils of the Royal Anthropological Institute and of the Folklore Society, to the Committee of the Egypt Exploration Society, to the publishers of *Discovery* (Messrs Benn), and to the editors of *The Manchester Guardian* and *The Evening News* I am indebted for permission to include in this book articles of mine that have already appeared in their various journals and papers.

To Professor J. L. Myres I must here express my sincere thanks for reading through all the proofs in collaboration with my brother; and to Mr E. S. Thomas, late of the Egyptian Ministry of Finance, and now Assistant in the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford, thanks are due for supplying me with better translations of the Arabic charms, etc., than I had before.

All the photographs, I should state, have been taken by myself, with the exception of a few which were taken in 1920 by my friend Mr D. J. V. Forster, of Pembroke College, Oxford, at my request, on the occasions when he was present with me at the ceremonies which they illustrate.

I have purposely suppressed the names of people and villages in nearly every instance as I do not think it would be either desirable or fair (see p. 231) to publish them in a semi-popular book of this kind.

Finally, I should like to point out that with the spread of education the old customs and beliefs are already beginning to die out. It is thus most important that they should be recorded at once, before they suffer complete extinction. I hope, therefore, that my work

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THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

CHAPTER I

EGYPTIAN VILLAGES AND THEIR INHABITANTS

THE natural barriers of Egypt (Fig. 1) have enabled the inhabitants, particularly those of the upper country, to live in comparative isolation throughout the whole of their history. On the north side lies the sea, along the east and west sides stretch vast, almost waterless deserts, while to the south ingress by way of the Nile is impeded by a series of cataracts. Their geographical isolation has doubtless been responsible for the characteristic conservatism of the Egyptian peasants. This conservatism is particularly apparent in their religious and social customs and their commoner industries, which, as will be more especially seen in the final chapter, have remained almost, if not entirely, unchanged from Pharaonic times.

The vast solitudes of the deserts are terrifying to the country folk, most of whom, up to the present day, cannot be induced to traverse even the lower fringes of those wastes after sunset (see Fig. 2). Fear of hyenas, and, still more, fear of *ʿafārīt*,[1] forbids any man to venture beyond the cultivation at night. The ordinary peasant, unless he is obliged to remain in the fields either to protect his crops or to watch over his sheep and goats, returns to his village before sunset, remaining there until just before the dawn of the following day.

The deserts have proved themselves valuable defences against invasion, the peoples who conquered the country at different periods of its history having usually entered it from the north-east. These invaders do not seem to have left any very marked impression on the physical aspect of the Upper Egyptians at any rate; most of these still bear a striking facial resemblance to the ancient inhabitants of the land whom we see depicted on the walls of the temples and tomb-chapels and in the portrait-statues of the Old,

[1] See Chapter XIV.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Middle, and New Kingdoms. What really is beginning to affect the racial purity of the Egyptians is the presence among them of the descendants of negro slaves, who have been imported in large numbers by the Arabs in comparatively recent times. Many of them are now settled in certain of the villages, where they have

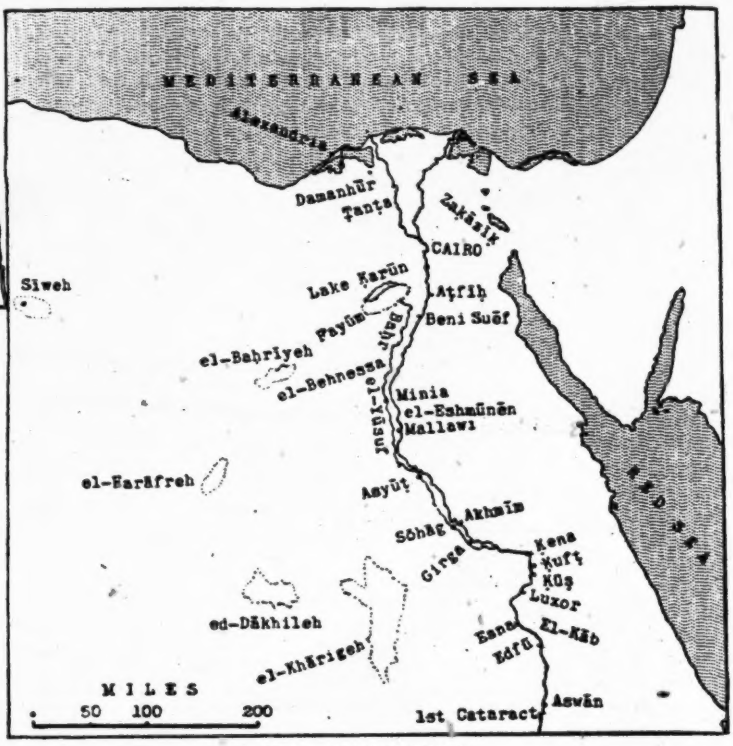

FIG. 1. MAP OF EGYPT

married among themselves or with the *fellāḥīn*, the result being that the population of such villages is almost entirely composed of black, or half-black, people. So far as I have observed, this negroid element is particularly marked in the Fayūm and Beni Ṣuēf, and on the edge of the cultivation in Minia and Asyūṭ provinces, where large numbers of Arabs have been settled for several generations.

The influence of the deserts may be seen in Egyptian folk-tales,

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Numbers of these prophylactics may be seen hanging from the necks of the hapless infants.

The various primitive medicinal remedies, well known to, and used by, all village matrons, are of such a nature that one wonders how any child manages to survive at all. Most of the women have a deeply rooted objection to going to a doctor for advice, supposing one to be available in the neighbourhood ; and I have found it hard work to overcome this prejudice, even in the case of people who know me well and who have every confidence in me. It is encouraging to hear that the Egyptian Government has recently allocated a certain sum of money for the purpose of starting baby-welfare centres. If only these institutions can be got into good working order, and can be utilized for the purpose of training young girls in the proper care and management of children, it will be a big step in the right direction, will ensure a much stronger and healthier peasantry, and will put an end to a vast amount of unnecessary suffering. During the years I have lived among these people I have had hundreds of sick children of all ages brought to me, and it has been heartbreaking to realize, as having had no medical training I inevitably must, that I am quite incapable of dealing with the terrible diseases from which they are often suffering. As will be seen in some of the subsequent chapters, a great deal of this sickness is due to superstition—taboos against washing, for instance, being very strict.

Much good has, of course, been done by the dispensaries, which in the past were run by Englishwomen ; but they are naturally limited in number, and the mothers will often defer taking their children there for advice and medicine till it is almost too late, or, at any rate, till the child has become very ill indeed. I myself had the privilege of seeing something of what was accomplished by an English lady at one of these dispensaries during the first three or four years that I resided in Egypt. I can bear witness to the splendid work she did, and I know how much she was loved and respected by the hundreds of poor women who brought their children to her for treatment. I am sure, from what I have heard of similar institutions in other parts of the country, that the same good work has been done by many others in the different provinces. The number of these dispensaries is not great enough to meet the crying need, and those that do exist have to be supported by funds from the Government, for they receive practically no support, so

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THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN

far as I know, from private individuals. It is very different in England, where the hospitals for children and adults alike are supported by voluntary contributions. It is not that charity is lacking in Egypt—far from it; but for *organized* charity such as we have in England there is a crying need.

It is not altogether surprising, considering the state of ignorance in which they exist, that the mental outlook of most of the villagers is low. As far as the women are concerned, there is nothing to raise it. Sexual matters form the chief topic of their conversation, and this has a most degrading effect both on them and on their children, before whom they discuss the most private matters without the slightest reserve. Thus the children from their very early years hear subjects spoken of and joked about in a manner that is most revolting to educated people. What chance have the children in such circumstances of growing up into pure-minded men and women? I am told (for such conversation rarely takes place in my presence) that the women are far greater offenders in this respect than the men, who usually refrain from discussing their wives with outsiders. Whether this is true or not I am not in a position to say, but at any rate the children, and especially the girls, who are more constantly with their mothers than the boys, hear the most private sexual matters openly discussed, and in such a way as to poison their minds at the very outset of their lives. Marriage is, of course, the one and only aim in life among the girls, and the desire to get a husband is encouraged in every way by the mothers. It is quite a pitiful sight to see a little girl decked out in all the jewellery she can muster, dressed in a gaily coloured frock decorated with beads and jangles (Fig. 17), and with a veil drawn coquettishly across her face, standing about the village street, or outside the house, obviously on the look-out to attract some man. In all this they are aided and abetted by their mothers, who regard it as a compliment to themselves as well as to their daughters if the latter are sought after as wives at an early age. The Egyptian Government is endeavouring to prohibit the very early marriages which have been usual in the past, and there is now a law forbidding a girl to marry till she is sixteen and a boy till he is eighteen. However, in small, out-of-the-way villages the law has been disobeyed to my certain knowledge in more than one case. False ages were, I suppose, given to the *ḳāḍi*, as the man who draws up the marriage contracts is called; and he, in view of the fee he

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt
COPTS MR10

similar erections on their backs, follow, bearing other female relatives and friends, many of the women uttering their *zaghārīṭ* as they proceed. I am told that a bride is thus conveyed on a camel if her husband lives in another village, but that she rides a horse if he lives in the same village as her parents. I have myself, however, never seen a bride on horseback.

Now that Ford cars are so common in Egypt even the *fellāḥīn* sometimes use them for conveying the bride and her friends to the bridegroom's house, the wedding procession thereby losing a great deal of its old picturesqueness. Cartloads of furniture are carried from the bride's house to that of the bridegroom, usually on the day before she goes there herself. Everything is left uncovered while it is being conveyed to the house, so that people may see what good furniture the bride is taking with her!

Music plays an important part in all the marriage festivities, and the bridal procession often includes a band. The groom gives a feast in his house to all his male friends, the bride remaining in a room at the top of the house with her female relatives and companions. The women dance a peculiar dance on these occasions, usually known to Europeans as the *danse à ventre*. It is exceedingly ugly, and must require a special development of abdominal muscles. A woman or girl who performs in this way first ties a sash tightly round her waist, then, holding out a stick in front of her in both hands, she jerks her stomach up and down, turning round and round as she does so. As I have said before,[1] the bride's friends present her with small sums of money, placing these gifts on her upturned face. As evening advances guns are fired, the women utter their *zaghārīṭ*, and the musicians likewise contribute to the general din. An awning is usually erected outside the house, and here the men congregate, congratulating the bridegroom and drinking coffee and smoking. The festivities are usually kept up for two or three days unless the people are very poor.

Among the Copts the preliminary arrangements are much the same as among the Muslims, but with them there is, of course, a marriage service in the church. Among the *fellāḥīn* the bride is brought to church on a camel if she and her bridegroom live in different villages, but on a horse if their homes are in the same village. The bride is followed by her female friends similarly mounted. I am told that the service takes place in the evening,

[1] See p. 87.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

One of the customs that one would be glad to see die out in Egypt is the blood-feud. As far as I can gather from scholars acquainted with the ancient history of the country, this custom does not seem to be a native one. I fancy it must have been introduced into Egypt at the time of the Arab conquest. It is a very terrible custom, and one that will be very difficult to abolish, for many of these family feuds have persisted for several generations, and still continue with no sign of abatement. The weapons used in con-

FIG. 59. CROWD PULLING THE ROPES TO RAISE THE SUNKEN VESSEL

nexion with blood-feuds are often the same as those used in inter-village fights, though firearms are sometimes employed. The rule is, so I was told, that the murderer, or a member of his family, must be killed by the avenger with exactly the same form of weapon as he (the murderer) used, and, if possible, on the very spot where the murder to be avenged was committed.

One day, as I was riding through the cultivation, an Egyptian friend of mine who was with me pointed to a certain place in the fields where a man had lately been strangled by a large handkerchief being tightly knotted round his throat. Shortly afterward, my friend told me, vengeance was taken by a member of the victim's family, who killed one of the murderer's relatives in the same way

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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CHAPTER X

AGRICULTURE AND HARVEST RITES

THE wealth and prosperity of Egypt is, and always has been, dependent upon the produce of the soil, and the peasants are before everything else agriculturalists, as is also indicated by the Egyptian Arabic word for peasant—*fellāḥ* (plural *fellāḥīn*), meaning one who digs or tills. The peasants, most of whom are quite illiterate, are remarkably clever agriculturalists, and every young boy is well versed in all that pertains to the cultivation of the soil. Their methods are, for the most part, very primitive, though, of course, the present system of storing water and of distributing it over various districts has been adopted comparatively recently, and to maintain it a number of highly trained engineers are required. This book is not concerned with these modern developments, which, indeed, lie beyond the scope of anthropology, but with the ordinary work in the fields, where ancient methods and ancient implements are still largely employed, and ancient customs are still observed.

The cultivated lands in Egypt lie along either bank of the river, without any apparent boundaries, for there are no hedges to divide the fields as in England. To the eye of the ordinary traveller there is nothing to indicate where one man's property ends and another's begins. The fields are broken up into small squares, separated from each other by ridges of earth and narrow trenches. When water is distributed over a given area it is conducted through the trenches into the square plots by making an opening through the ridges which surround them. When the plots have received their due allowance of water the openings are built up again and the stream is directed to another portion of the land.

The greater number of the peasants own or hire small plots which are marked off one from the other by boundary stones stuck into the ground at intervals of six feet or more. Many a village quarrel has arisen over these stones, the removal of a neighbour's landmark being a constant cause of disturbance. If a man, for

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Copts MR10

magician dismissed her and she vanished. The woman had been brought from a village about three miles off, and, on inquiry, my acquaintance found that, at the time when she had been brought before them, she was making bread in her house, when her dress would, of course, be covered with flour! After this remarkable exhibition my acquaintance told me that he felt that the magician really had some extraordinary powers.

The object of one of the spells possessed by my magician friend is "to make a king or any governor merciful to his subjects, and to ensure his granting any request made to him." To make such a spell effective the following procedure is adopted. At sunrise the magician makes a fire of wood, or, perhaps, charcoal, or cow-dung,[1] but not of *būṣ*. In this fire he will put two kinds of incense, ordinary frankincense and incense scented with musk. While the incense is burning the magician will repeat the names of the angels who are in the fourth heaven, and the name of their leader, seven times. The name of the leader of the angels in the fourth heaven is Kilīmya.

After he has finished this repetition he pronounces a formula beginning: "O angels, and leader of the angels of the fourth heaven! O Sun, which gives light all over the world!" Then he again addresses the sun, saying, "I pray you, O Sun, for the sake of the chief king [or governor, as the case may be, mentioning also his name and the name of his mother] that you may make his heart kind to so and so [*i.e.*, the suppliant]." Then the magician writes a charm and gives it to the petitioner.

The charm consists of a repetition of the names of the angels in the fourth heaven, and it must be worn under the left arm. Such charms are usually enclosed in a small leather case, which is suspended by a cord from the neck in such a way that it hangs underneath the arm.

If a man wishes to injure an enemy by making him unconscious he will go to a magician, who will tell him to bring some *'urūḳ el-fūweh* (roots of madder), the seeds of leeks, the fat of a crow, the fat of a tortoise (*fakrūn*),[2] and onion seeds. These ingredients, I am told, can be purchased at the shop of a village grocer. He must then light a fire and throw into it the five articles mentioned above. The smoke coming from this fire will make anyone who

[1] See pp. 154 f.

[2] Professor Margoliouth tells me that *fakrūn* is a Berber word, so possibly this particular magical receipt was brought into the country by Arabs or Moors.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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ground facing the house on which a mosque has lately been erected, had especially belonged to them. They were, of course, driven from this spot when the mosque was built, and since the introduction of motors and telephones, to which they strongly object, the road also had been made uninhabitable for them. They have therefore taken refuge in the Rest-house garden, where several people claim to have seen them. Three such appearances occurred during my residence.

One night, while my guard was enjoying a peaceful sleep, he

FIG. 134. THE REST-HOUSE AND ITS HAUNTED GARDEN

suddenly awoke in terror and saw towering above him a huge figure in the form of a man, which remained standing thus for a minute or two and then vanished. On another occasion the same guard saw an *'afrīt*, in the form of a dog, run round the garden, pass the windows of the Government offices overlooking it, and then vanish. About a week later, as my servant was crossing the garden on his way from the house to the kitchen, carrying a lighted lamp in his hand, the light was suddenly put out, though there was no wind, and presently he saw a shadow run along in the same direction as that taken by the dog. This, he said, when he recounted to me his adventure, was an *'afrīt*.

243 Northern Delta. It occupies about 6% of the cultivated area, but its acreage depends on the height of the Nile flood, and is controlled by the Government. Thus in 1935 there were 470,375 feddans under rice, in 1937 only 240,469, and in 1939 476,454. The rice is of good quality and can be exported.

241 [262 252] Beans (*fûl*) provide fodder for draught animals, from June to December; those of the best quality, prepared with oil or fat, make a rich and popular dish.

Onions and sugar-cane are grown in Upper Egypt.

Then there are barley, lentils and dates, not to mention vegetables and fruits, the cultivation of which, although confined to certain localities, increases year by year.

The fellah keeps a narrow strip or corner of his field for his own use. Here, without using any manure, he plants the vegetables appropriate to each season: *bamia* in winter, *fûl* in spring and *molokhiya* in summer. These will be mentioned again in the chapter on the fellah's food. Apart from occupying much less space than other crops, they are cultivated in much the same way as the rest.

241 463 181 Egypt is becoming a land of variety in crops, but this diversity has not involved any sort of specialisation for the fellah. He is still a manual labourer, a "Jack of all trades", and his work remains simple and monotonous. There is not enough differentiation to form specialists of any kind, nor enough uniformity to limit his work to one dull task. This means that the fellah can adapt himself to any new crop. He will never introduce a novelty himself, but will take to it if encouraged by authority, the more readily if experience proves it to pay. This has been noticeable in the case of flax.

177 242 407 Mechanical innovations, however, are a very different matter. The preceding pages will have made it clear that there is never any question of tractors, reapers or binders, let alone winnowing or threshing machines, or even cars and waggons. Such machines as these are scarcely more common today than in the past. The fellah is too poor to use them, and in any case he feels no need for any instrument which would divide him from the soil. It is true that the large estates under direct cultivation employ extremely modern machinery, which is handled by fellaheen, but this is an

exception. The fellaheen as a whole use no machinery at all. This is probably due less to habit or ignorance than to an instinct for self-preservation. If machinery is not more commonly used in Egyptian farming, the reason is that the owners find man-power more economical. For the moment the two points of view coincide. But it will not always be so. One day the fellaheen will increase their demands, and machines will become more profitable to the landowners. Manual labour should keep its leading place, however, for to mechanise labour in the Nile Valley would be to destroy the organic relationship which has grown up between the cultivators and their soil, and overthrow a balance now preserved by methods of labour appropriate to an abundant population.

2. Conditions of Work

To this soil the fellah devotes all his energies. He gives himself to it without reserve, even passionately when it is his own. But that is very rare. Here man belongs to the land, not the land to him. This is the true cause of both his lethargy and his poverty. None of the conditions under which he may labour make for freedom. Let us look in turn at each of the varying conditions which obtain today.

The Fellah as Forced Labourer

The *corvée* was suppressed in 1893, but continues to be legally applied in certain cases of public necessity. Then the fellah is mobilised by authority, torn from his field and his village, and sent to the spot where his services are needed.

It may be that the Nile flood threatens catastrophe. On such occasions hundreds of thousands of fellaheen are set to work day and night under the rod of officials and overseers to raise the embankments, build dykes, deal with any escape and watch the barrages.

Suppose a dyke is on the point of breaking. The fellaheen rush in a compact mass to the point of danger, each with his *fass* and basket. They heighten the dyke and buttress it with a great rampart composed of earth, rushes, palm-trunks, and — if need be — maize-stalks and sugar-cane.

In 1934 they saved the country by such efforts. The Government set aside L.E. 150,000 to fight the danger;

donkey to the fields and the *gamoossa* to the canal, where he climbs on its back and sets it turning the *saqia*. The child learns how to cry out, how to chase off thieving birds with stones, how to pick and even plant cotton. He does not lack amusement, for he has plenty of companions. During the day, when the men are toiling in the fields and the women are busy in the house or by the canal, the whole village belongs to the children. It is they whom a visitor sees first. They paddle stark naked in the pond, and learn to swim. They have bulging bellies, for they eat anything and everything. They play in the dust, spinning an onion as a top, hopping on one leg and holding the other heel with their hands, or shooting with a catapult (*nibla*) at date-palms or birds. When they are a little older they play at *sîga*, a kind of marble game with small pebbles which have to be moved into forty-nine holes made in the sand.

At about the age of seven the young fellah is circumcised, and thus introduced into the world of men. At this stage he has to go to the elementary school (*ilzamiya*), at least in the mornings. His parents are bound to send him, under pain of a fine of twenty piastres, or fifty for a second offence. 95% of the fellaheen are illiterate, and the Government wishes to wipe out this disgrace from the next generation. The 1923 Constitution decreed that education should be compulsory, but it is only since 1935 that this order has begun to take effect. Schools are being established all over the countryside. Gradually sites are being found in the villages, schools set up, and teachers appointed. Every year, places that within living memory had never seen a teacher are provided with a complete teaching staff. In 1946 there should be 4,600 free elementary schools, and the whole child population will be receiving instruction ([41]).

The parents do not understand these new ideas. Though accustomed to other tyrannical institutions, they do not resign themselves to this. Some Upper Egyptians of 'Ezbet Balkan, who had been fined for not sending their children to the compulsory Government school, attacked the teachers and wounded them. The peasants care little for education. They only want their children to help them to increase their earnings. Moreover, most villages are still served, according to the ancient system, by a *kuttab*, in which a blind teacher, seated on the ground, gathers a few children round him and teaches them the Koran.

857 [524] 852 872 656 [212] 177 871 183 579 871 794

7: Riad E-4, 5 (no date) 1960
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point to the Italian word Bilancin[1]. In this way could we seek the origin of the term « Bazha » (the base of the plough) to such origins? In addition to these foreign terms there are arabic names, e. g., « Silah » blade or share, « Riesh » = feathers, « Romh » spear, while the words « Antot » and « Naf » may belong to the Coptic or ultimately to the Egyptian languages. In this way we may see that the Delta, though homogeneous, reveal three segmented linguistic and cultural layers: the Egyptian, the Greco-Roman, and the Arabic. This conclusion, supported by historical records, has its reasoning in the geographical situation of the Delta as the northern limits of the Egyptian Nile Valley, as the area facing the Mediterranean, and lastly as the area exposed to Arabia.

If the Delta is established as one region, we can further divide it in two sub-regions. Leaning on the arguments stated above, the Eastern Delta would stand alone as a sub-region, while the other parts of the Delta would constitute the second sub-region. There is no part of the Delta other than its East which received so many human and cultural elements from the Middle-East and Arabia and it happens that that part, in what concerns the plough, is remarkably different in terminology and technique. This area, where type II is at home, did not only account for the several offshoots of plough forms (types III, VI ,VII) but also affected the manner in which the ploughman controls his plough. All over the Delta and Middle Egypt the ploughman marches beside his plough where a split handle or a double handle is used. This, as Winkler rightly pointed out[2] is due to the influence of plough Type II, where the ploughman always walk to the left of the plough. In the same source, Winkler claims that this habit of going beside the plough in itself is an evidence of the prior spread of plough II all over the Delta and Middle Egypt[3]. But we must not build a whole theory upon one factor. It is true, as we shall see below, that a curved beamed plough was discovered in Fayum dating to the Roman Period, but this plough was not single

[1] Winkler, H. A., 1936, p. 162.
[2] Winkler, 1936, pp. 148, 150.
[3] Winkler, 1936, pp. 150, 163.

/87 cont'd/ 755 776 171

the Agao sky-god Zar became a possessive spirit in the belief of the Abyssinians (15).

The word jar is to be found with little variations among the Abyssinians. Jar, among the Bileu, Daro among the Gongo, Yero among the Kafficho; it survived denoting an evil spirit among the Amharic speaking people in Abyssinia, (Zar), as Sar among the Somali tribes and as Jara among the Hadiya. (16)

Contrary to the specialized meanings and precise contents of the word among the different tribes of Abyssinia, we find the word Zar in Egypt, in the Sudan and in Arabia, as a general term designating possessive spirits as well as the ceremonies performed for them. Thus we can conclude that the Zar in the countries just mentioned was originally derived from Abyssinia. When a people takes over a cultural phenomenon from an other, there is a distinct tendency towards generalization. Considering the great appreciation which the beautiful Abyssinian slave-girls found in the whole Middle-East, we can assume that they brought with them both the word and the conception of the "Zar", especially as we know that many women believe in it in Abyssinia, in the Sudan, in Egypt and in Arabia. 755 776 177 [171] [171]

2. The notion: In Abyssinia as well as in the Sudan, in Egypt and in Arabia there is a notion that these spirits possess human beings, mostly women and that they never leave a body they inhabit. The history of this notion is somewhat confused in all countries with the exception of Abyssinia. There are two stories about the origin of the spirits told in Abyssinia: (17) One says that Eve had thirty children and that she hid fifteen of them when God 776 [171]

(15) Cerulli, "Zar", Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1934, p. 1217

(16) Trimingham J.S., Islam in Aethiopia, Oxford 1952, p. 257

(17) Leslau W., An Aethiopian Argot of people possessed by a spirit. Africa vol. XIX, No 3, July 1949, pp. 204/212

/88 cont'd/ 755 171 [534]

to be masculine, the Tambura feminine (19). Scant knowledge of the bands in Abyssinia forbids further discussion.

d. The sultans: As we have seen there are various groups of sultans in Egypt. In Abyssinia it is believed that living beings are haunted by former Gods degraded to a minor status. In the Sudan it is nearly the same as in Egypt with regard to local spirits, i.e. "Timsah" (crocodile) Turia, Nas-El-Gebal (Turia the people of the mountains) (20). [776]

4. The ceremony: The method of determining the special spirits is different in Egypt and the Sudan. In Abyssinia and the Sudan the Kūdiya orders the musical band to play a special tune for every spirit and the patient sits quietly until she suddenly stands up and begins to dance. This is taken as a sign that the tune of the spirit has inspired and compelled her to dance. The ceremony itself is quite the same as in Egypt, including the demands of the spirits. In Abyssinia blood of the sacrificed animal is drunk. In the Sudan sweets and the bones of the animal are thrown into the river.

5. The Zar-language: There is a special Zar-language to which some Arabic words are added. It seems likely that the Zar-language is a combination of Amharic, Galla and Old-Aethiopian, the dominating language is, however, Amharic. (21) [196] [197]

The Zar, as we can see now, is either a very old practice and belief in the whole area of North-East Africa, or it might have come from Abyssinia. Basically it is formed on the fear of the unintelligible world /89/ and psychological phenomena; it satisfies the unseen powers by offerings. The violent and barbaric dance betrays a very strong African influence, especially the dominance of the 755 781 177 [171]

(19) Zenkovsky, S. Zar and Tambura in Omdurman. Sudan Notes and Records, vol. 31, part I, June 1950, p. 73

(20) Ibid, p. 70, and Trimingham J.S., Islam in the Sudan, Oxford 1949, p. 175

(21) Leslau, W. Ibid, p. 210

/89 cont'd/ 755 781 177

drums and the cries uttered can be applied also in describing a war, or another Central-African dance.

The Kūdiya is a real medicine man who is an incarnation of the spirits. The sacrifices, the smearing of the body with blood, the collecting of the bones of the sacrificed animal, the burying it in the soil or throwing it in the river etc... are all elements of the art practiced by an African tribe. In other words, this article could have been called: "An African Element in Egypt." 756 782 791 177

The twofold and complicated Zar-conception of Egypt is due to the Egyptian cultural type. Every belief of supernatural nature was combined in the Zar, even Islamic saints were added to the list of spirits and some Quoranic words are recited. 755 177

An important factor which is responsible for the survival of such an interesting practice is that it offers an opportunity for women gathering and dancing, for buying clothes and jewelry, and satisfying some sexual urge. 755 182 562

Zusammenfassung.

Im heutigen Aegypten sowie in Abessinien und im Sudan spielt der Glaube an böse Geister eine bedeutende Rolle, namentlich unter den Frauen niedereren Standes. Die Geister gehen in die Körper ihrer Opfer ein und nehmen sie in Besitz. Nur durch die komplizierte Zar-Zeremonie können sie besänftigt werden. Die im Zar mitwirkenden Personen und ihre Funktionen werden eingehend geschildert: die Zentralgestalt Kudiya (meist eine Frau, nur selten ein Mann), einige Assistenten und Musiker und schliesslich die Geister selbst. Die Untersuchung enthält auch eine Reihe von Hinweisen auf Altägypten.

7. Riad E-4. 5 (no date) 1960
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handled. What is more is that the double handles of this Roman plough reared backwards in as much an angle as that observed in contemporary plough type V. What seems probable here is that plough type IV is directed by the ploughman in the same way as plough II only because the handles are not retreating backwards—hence it would be difficult posture for the ploughman to lean forward behind the ploughand all the time keeping a good distance between himself and the plough, lest his feet should run in the rear of the base. The proper question would be why the handles of this type took a right angle instead of the obtuse angle of type V? One seems to infer this new adjustment of the handles to influences from type II. This, however, does not need the pre-existance of type II in Middle Egypt, because influences can take many channels other than a prior existance.

Region Two : Upper Egypt. This region extends from Aswan in the south to approximately Minya in the North. This region represent the counterpart of the first one, and here we find a deep homogeneity represented by identity and similarity of techniques. Fine dialectal differences are present, e.g.. « Wish» and « Wegh» or « Wijh» — face (for the base of the plough), and « Gabaien» or « Gafaien» (for the handles). Identity is attained in naming the essential parts of the handle : « Wish» for the base, « Sikka» for the share, « Gabaien» for the handles, « Gasaba» for the beam, « Koraga» for the beam extension, and « Karab» for the yoke.

Within this region one can find two sub-regions, namely to the North and South of the Nile bend at Qena. The southern sub-region is full of manifestations apparently very old. This may be due to the fact that this area is the southern most of cultivable Egypt, thus representing conservatism at most. We may add to this the existance of influences from Nubia which adjoins the region from the South. We know that the inhabitants of the Island of Baharif, to the north of Aswan, are all Nubians, hence the existance of the special terms which figure on maps (e) of fig. 1 and map (e) of fig. 2. On map (e) fig. 1 we see two localities in Idfu District, west of the Nile, where Hadd is applied to the handles instead of Gafaien. These two localities –

7: Riad E-4, 5 (no date) 1960
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Kelh and Benban were given this terminology by Winkler[1]. As we have made investigations in the area between these localities (several villages were studied: Abu Ennasr, Abu Ibny, and Rikabi, all of which are put under the cumulative name of Ramadi South in our list) we are led to the conclusion that Winkler must have misunderstood his interpreter in one way or the other. Nevertheless we have specialized a different colouring for both localities on the map pending further research. The most characterising elements in the southern sub-region are the common usage of «Wegh» and «Wijh», for the base, «'Amud» instead of «Miftah» for the pin, and «Mindef» instead of «Weira» or «Barufa» for the cross peg of the beam extension. This area is furthermore characterised by the overall usage of plough type V. The Northern sub-region is not so valid in its uniting characters, and is more exposed to influences from the North.

Region Three: Middle Egypt. This region includes Giza, Beni Suef, Fayum and Minya provinces. Region of weakness may safely be applied to this area: a glance at the maps on figs. 1 and 2 would suffice to convey this quality to the reader. It sometimes represent a satellite of the Delta cultural region, and in other times it is attached to Upper Egypt. Such a state of affairs can be readily seen from maps (a), (b), and (c) of fig. 1. But this situation does not include all the region, and one can easily divide it to three sub-regions: Giza Province in general present an increasing influence from the Delta, Minya Province present the other extremity: the Upper Egyptian region knocks always at the door, and lastly the intermediary area of Fayum and Beni Suef which in reality represent in more than one way symptoms of independence symbolised in the peculiarities of its terminology. Here we have «Higr» for beam, «Bagrom» for pin, «Saflit» for the beam extension, «Shaddab» for the cross peg of the beam extension, and «Danad» for the yoke.

Although type IV prevails in this region at large, the different appellations suggest to a philologist the deeper study of such word origins,

[1] Winkler, 1936, p. 153.

7: Riad E-4, 5 (no date) 1960
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either in the Fayum Coptic or with a mixture of Greek origins, for we know that Fayum was once one of the important centers of the Greek Ptolomies.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE EGYPTIAN PLOUGH

It is a well established fact that the first recorded form of plough is found on the monuments of Ancient Egypt. Many drawings from the Old and the New Kingdoms of Ancient Egypt can give us a picture relevant to question of the evolution of the plough. There is also a coloured wooden figure of the plough which belong to the 11th or the 12th dynasty kept in the British Museum, and many original ploughs were found near Fayum which belong to the Greek and Roman periods of the history of Egypt, and which are kept in the different Museums of the world, e. g. Cairo and Berlin. All these examples of the plough covering a very long time span can be used as a sound basis for the study of the history of the present Egyptian plough, if we add to it the description of the plough in the 18th century A. D., recorded by Norden[1], and by the scientists of the French Expedition to Egypt[2].

In an unpublished report in the Agricultural Museum of Cairo, a short note is written on the subject of the ancient Egyptian plough. Extracts from the note runs as follows :

> « The ancient Egyptian traditions alledge that the Egyptians are indebted to Osiris, God of Plants in the Egyptian Panthaeon, for the knowledge of the plough. Evidences from early drawings proove that the plough in its original form was worked only by man, and it was only drawn by oxen in the drawings of Meidum, i.e., begining from the third Dynasty. In that form the plough had only one wooden share for ploughing the soft soils ; and had a double wooden share covered by a sheet of bronze to plough harder soils.... The plough was called in the Egyptian language SIKKA. »

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(1) See references under Norden.
(2) See references under Girard.

7: Riad E-4, 5 (no date) 1960
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174
• 177
*407

We have no doubt that the single handled curved beamed plough belong to the Mediterranean cultural region, and because Egypt, though lying on the coasts of the Mediterranean, represent in its greater part a somewhat isolated area (especially Upper Egypt), it has evolved its plough type according to its needs. Furthermore Egypt in nearly all its Dynastic history was an independent state, and perhaps that helped towards keeping traditional impliments. When the Greek family of the Ptolomies consolidated its rule in Alexandria, Egypt was open now to the influences of the Greek-Mediterranean culture. This still attained its zenith during the Roman occupation of Egypt. From the Roman period onwards Egypt was part and parcel of successive macrocosmos, namely the Roman Empire, the Arabic Empire, and the Turkish Empire. We are sure that so much influences played its part in the development of the Egyptian plough, but these influences did not overcome the two handled plough, which resisted these encroushments and succeeded to remain nearly intact in southern Upper Egypt, and co-existed with the mediterranean single handled plough in the Delta, intact in its isolated pocket in the Prarues of Lake Manzala, and in the northern parts of Upper Egypt. It is only in most parts of the Delta which was incessantly under the influence of the Mediterranean, that a compromise between the Egyptian double handle-straight beamed plough and the Mediterranean single curved-straight beamed type, took place in the plough types I and III, i. e., the split handle-straight beamed type, and the single handle-straight beamed type. The characteristics of plough type I gives us every reason to conclude that it leans heavily on the principle of the Egyptian double handled plough, the only compromise is that the handles are united in the upper part, but the projection of the handles was kept to a certain degree, together with the straight beam. Type III inclines more to the Mediterranean plough in keeping the single handle, but the compromise took place in the change of the curved beam to a straight beam.

One can now safely conclude that the evolution of the Egyptian plough took the following periods and events :

1. Throughout Dynastic Egypt the double handled-straight beamed plough persisted all over Egypt. This plough deserve the appellation

7: Riad E-4, 5 (no date) 1960
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of the Egyptian plough due to its archaic age. In its relatively purest form it survive in plough type V.

2. Begining of the Greco-Roman period the Mediterranean plough extended over many parts of the Delta, and the northern part of Upper Egypt including Fayum. But we are certain that it did not exist in its pure form, at least in Fayum, and was adjusted to the double handle principle. In its pure form it persist now in Eastern Delta. This fact may be explained by the everlasting stream of Arab settlers in this part of the Delta - being geographically exposed to Arabia. Plate 8 show us that the Arabs of Palastine, and those of Hadramut use the Mediterranean plough. The same plough is used in the Oasis of Siwa, the coast West of Alexandria, and in Libya and North-west Africa. It is only Western and Central Delta which break through this continuous distribution of the Mediterranean plough. One can conclude that this plough type did not reign over the Delta as a whole, even in the Greco-Roman period. We must not imagine that as soon as it came to Egypt, it expelled the older double handled plough. We should also bear in mind that neither the Greek nor the Romans ploughed the land themselves, but formed a governing aristocracy in Egypt. It is highly probable that this plough type gained sure footing after the Arabic settlement in the Eastern Delta. This is due to the fact that the Arabs settled down and cultivated the land themselves somewhere around the 10th century. Bearing this in mind however, does not negate the pre-Arab existance of this plough in different parts of the Delta.

3. Plough type IV, which retains most of the characteristics of the type V, was affected but slightly by the Mediterranean plough. This may be prooved by the fact that the handles does not retreat or project rearwards, but are fixed at nearly right angles to the base. This is a special characteristic of the single handle of the Mediterranean plough.

4. Plough type I has been already mentioned.

5. Plough type III, has been also mentioned, but we may add that this type probably represent the newest adaptation of plough types in Egypt.

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

56.

Self Importance.

539x 578

Addressed to a wretched, dirty fellow who is something of a braggart. He looks like a smutty, black baking-tin, but acts as if he were of great importance.

Alla ʿaṣ-ṣāg el-hindi,
fellaḥ we-ʿāmilê gindi!

Allah! look at the fine baking-tin!
Only a peasant and would play the soldier!

1. Literally: "Indian baking-tin" The adjective "(East) Indian" is used frequently with stuffs as an equivalent for "excellent". [177 192]

2. One must not have in mind the tame, modern Egyptian military, but rather the Turkish soldiers of former times. Compare No. 55.

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

78.

A Ready Answer.

×539 312 462 521 In the morning the women and girls come to the river-bank, to draw water with their Balāliṣ (singular ballāṣ), the well-known, and characteristic water-jars. This is always accompanied by much jesting and talking.

Here a young man teases the girls (ll. 1—2) and they give him a ready answer (ll. 3—4).

Ya banāt, yalli betimlu,
kira-l-mōrade kām?
ʿAšara min abu ṭaʾa
we-bōse min taḥt el-ḫuzām.

"You girls who are drawing water,
How much is the rent of the watering-place?"
"Ten of 'those with the window'
And a kiss under the nose-ring."

[117] [436] 3. The peasants call the escutcheon on the back of European coins, a "window". Thus the people distinguish the English sovereigns: "abu-š-šibbâk" = "father of the window" and "abu-l-ḥuṣān" = "father of the horse". The latter are, besides, more popular among the peasants. In our song of course no small coin is meant.

[301] [264] 4. The nose-ring is usually put through the right side of the nose, and its pendants hang down over the mouth, so that in order to put anything into the mouth, they must be held aside.

117.

Light Minded.

×539

Ummāli ē? ummāli ē?
āḫod el-fellāḥ: aʿmil-bo ē?
āḫod el-gindi
abu šāl hindi.
Hāwa yeṛanni
wanarudd ʿalê.

Of course, what else? Of course, what else?
If I take the peasant, what shall I do with him?
I will take the soldier
With the Indian shawl.
He shall sing
And I shall answer him.

118.

Dost Thou Think of Me?

Yasmar, yabu ʿēn ʿasalīye,
garḥê hawāk itmakkan fiye.
Yasmar, yabu-l-libās eṣ-ṣīni,
ana ʿala bālak wala-nte nāsîni.

Thou brown one, with the honey-brown eyes,
The wound of thy love is fast fixed in me.
[291] Thou brown one with the dainty drawers,
Dost thou remember me, or hast thou forgotten me?

[263] 1. Egyptian honey is much darker than ours.
[177] 3. Literally: "Chinese under drawers". Chinese is used here as Indian is in Nos. 56 and 117.